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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 09/11/09

INDEX:

- (1) U.S. seeks Japan's continued refueling mission in Indian Ocean - a source of trouble for Hatoyama diplomacy (Nikkei)
- (2) Eight years after 9/11; Japan should also participate in war on terror (Sankei)
- (3) Eight years after 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S.; Beyond war on terrorism (Asahi)
- (4) Editorial: Don't make the Afghan war the "Obama War" (Tokyo Shimbun)
- (5) Editorial: Coalition agreement questionable for Japan-U.S. alliance (Sankei)
- (6) Final coordination underway for Japan-China-ROK summit (Yomiuri)
- (7) Okinawa calls on U.S. military, other organizations to reduce base noise (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- (8) Nago mayor, citizens complain survey of noise levels near Futenma relocation site conducted through demo flights did not reflect reality (Okinawa Times)
- (9) Aircraft noise increased at 10 places around Kadena Air Base in Fiscal 2008 (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- (10) H2B rocket launch successful, Japanese space development enters new phase (Asahi)

ARTICLES:

(1) U.S. seeks Japan's continued refueling mission in Indian Ocean - a source of trouble for Hatoyama diplomacy

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Abridged)
September 11, 2009

Ahead of the establishment next week of a coalition government led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) a source of conflict has already emerged between Japan and the United States. The U.S. government has revealed a plan to ask the DPJ to reconsider its policy of terminating the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean after it expires next January. The DPJ intends to expedite its efforts to find new assistance measures replacing the refueling mission. Nevertheless, given the harsh security situation in Afghanistan, options are limited for the new administration.

A U.S. Defense Department spokesman has urged Japan to continue its refueling activities beyond next January. Last night a DPJ executive explained the spokesman's comment this way: "The message is nothing new. The U.S. government probably cannot change what it has said in the past."

The DPJ did not specify its stance on the refueling mission in its manifesto (campaign pledges). President Yukio Hatoyama has announced that the incoming administration will not extend the refueling mission once it expires. The DPJ intends to adhere to this policy even if the United States calls for an extension.

TOKYO 00002114 002 OF 010

At the same time, the party is aware that the deterioration of relations with the United States might damage the stability of the (DPJ-led) administration. The party is exploring ways of continuing to contribute to the war against terrorism by coming up with new steps, such as civilian support, although the refueling mission will be terminated next January.

Anti-government Taliban militants are regaining strength, and the security situation in Afghanistan is rapidly deteriorating. What Japan can do to assist Afghanistan is limited. In 2008 the DPJ came up with a set of assistance measures including an approach to end disputes (in Afghanistan) and humanitarian and reconstruction support. The measures were criticized by the government and the ruling coalition as impractical.

The DPJ is certain to lose more options once it forms a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which opposes the overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). When the party was led by Ichiro Ozawa, the DPJ advocated joining the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The SDP is likely to oppose this idea as well.

Reportedly the DPJ does not plan to dispatch SDF troops to Afghanistan. Many also think that it is difficult to dispatch civilian assistance teams in view of the security situation in Afghanistan. If the involvement of the SDF becomes a topic of discussion, it could cause trouble for the DPJ-led coalition government.

(2) Eight years after 9/11; Japan should also participate in war on terror

SANKEI (Page 2) (Editorial)
September 11, 2009

Today marks the eighth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. in 2001. The attacks killed about 3,000 people, including 24 Japanese nationals. Let us offer a silent prayer to those victims, honoring the memory of the tragedy.

U.S. President Barack Obama faces the anniversary under an unprecedentedly severe situation. Elements of Al-Qaeda, an international terrorist group responsible for the attacks on the

U.S., are still hiding in Afghanistan. In this country, an increasing number of troops of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) force, including the U.S., and civilians have been injured or killed. There has been no remarkable progress in improvement of the security situation and reconstruction efforts there.

A presidential election was held in Afghanistan in late August, and the tallying of the votes cast is going on. Since (the UN-backed watchdog) has invalidated more than 2,000 votes, the Afghan government is having difficulty ensuring the validity of the election.

In an airstrike on Sept. 4 by the NATO force targeting Taliban militants, scores of civilians were also killed accidentally. Such incidents have strained relations between the Afghan people and the NATO force.

TOKYO 00002114 003 OF 010

Immediately after the 9/11 attacks took place eight years ago, an overwhelming number of Americans supported the war on terrorism in Afghanistan. Recently, however, many Americans have been critical of even the government's decision to increase troops in Afghanistan. In an opinion poll conducted by CNN, 57 PERCENT of respondents voiced opposition against the (NATO force's) military operation in Afghanistan.

Keeping in mind the fact that terrorist acts have continually taken place around the world also since 9/11, we should recognize anew that Afghanistan is the forefront of the war on terror. Taliban elements have crossed the border and have also engaged in terrorist attacks in Pakistan, a nuclear power. It is vital to maintain stability in this region, including Pakistan, for the sake of world safety.

By including measures to assist public welfare in his comprehensive strategy toward Afghanistan out this March, President Obama indicated a willingness to change the strategy heretofore used to combat terrorism. Obama, though, has clearly said that the military campaign in Afghanistan is a "necessary war." For his new strategy to succeed, it is vital for the U.S. to ensure unity in the international community and to obtain cooperation from other countries, especially its allies.

Japan has provided aid in public welfare in Afghanistan, including dispatching civilians to help reconstruct schools and hospitals, as well as giving advice on rice farming. The Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean has been evaluated as Japan's most distinguished contribution. Eyeing the launch of a new government led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) on Sept. 16, the Pentagon spokesman said: "We are hopeful that there will be continuity (in the strength of the alliance between the two countries)."

A new coalition government should be aware that Japan's continued refueling mission will lead to preventing terrorism in Japan and other countries. The DPJ has said that it would end the mission next January, when the law authorizing the mission expires. But the party should make a policy switch to continue this mission, bearing the actual situation in Afghanistan in mind.

(3) Eight years after 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S.; Beyond war on terrorism

ASAHI (Page 3) (Editorial)
September 11, 2009

We recall then President Bush's tense look on TV screens. Hijacked airplanes plowed into the World Trade Center Building in New York and into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2009, claiming the lives of more than 3,000.

Bush swore that he would take vengeance on the terrorists, saying on TV, "This is an act of war." He declared war on international terrorism.

Bush's war, which started with an attack on Afghanistan, led to a strike on Iraq. U.S. soldiers who died in Iraq alone have by far exceeded the number of victims claimed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Iraq has lost a vast greater number of civilians to war.

TOKYO 00002114 004 OF 010

This year President Obama succeeded Bush, who continued to describe the war against terrorism as a just cause. The key word of the new administration is reconciliation with Islam. The war on terrorism has thus been replaced with confrontation against militant extremism.

This is a change brought about by lessons learned from the devastating destruction, sacrifice, sorrow and anger visited by war over eight years. It is a switch from the previous policy line of simply categorizing people as terrorists or allies, and pummeling with overwhelming military power those determined to be terrorists.

New strategies, such as getting to the root of nondemocratic politics, injustice, poverty and sagging economies, elements that are encouraging support for extremists, and building confidence with people with different cultures and religions through dialogue, are discernable in President Obama's policy stance.

The world welcomed this direction from Obama. In Japan, too, a change of government from the LDP, which supported the Bush-style war on terrorism, to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which opposed the Iraq War, will take place. The moment has arrived for Japan to establish a proactive foreign policy and a mechanism to provide support that are different from those of the LDP era.

However, the war cannot be easily ended once it was started. President Obama, who advocates dialogue, is now facing this grim fact. He is dispatching additional troops to Afghanistan, deeming the war in that nation to be a necessary one. However, the situation is gradually deteriorating.

The Taliban militants, who had been driven out of the administration, have regained strength. The Afghan government's ability to govern is questionable. Casualties are sharply increasing among troops dispatched by various European countries. A large number of civilians have become collateral damage during bombings. Since skepticism about continuing to station troops in Afghanistan is growing in many countries, Britain and Germany have proposed holding an international conference with the aim of restoring security.

Concern about Afghanistan becoming a second Vietnam is beginning to be heard in and outside the U.S. -- the U.S. had to pull out of Vietnam, failing to achieve stability even though it repeatedly reinforced troops.

How to rebuild Afghanistan is one of the most difficult challenges facing the world. What is clear, however, is that it is impossible to find a way to subdue Islamic extremism without deepening dialogue with Islamic societies.

(4) Editorial: Don't make the Afghan war the "Obama War"

TOKYO (Page 5) (Full)
September 11, 2009

Tomorrow will mark the eighth anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. A matter of grave concern for the Obama Administration is the resolution of the Afghan war, which bears a relation to (preventing) the spread of nuclear weapons to terrorists. The Obama administration should not turn the former administration's negative legacy into the "Obama War."

TOKYO 00002114 005 OF 010

Two airliners crashed into the World Trade Center Twin Towers,

killing about 3,000 people, including 24 Japanese, at one fell swoop. The attack was carried out by the Islamic fundamentalist group Al-Qaeda. We still remember the horror of the terrorist attacks. Although Ground Zero is now being redeveloped, family members and victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks still bear emotional scars.

If the Iraq war symbolizes "Bush's war," the Afghan war is a touchstone for the Obama administration -- a touchstone of how to exit from the war and cope with terrorism.

Ever since his presidential campaign, Obama has advocated a nation-building policy that attaches priority to the civilian sector, while denying resolution by military strength alone. "The true terrorist threat facing America comes from Afghanistan," he said.

Since assuming office Obama has consistently called for dialogue with Islam. His strategy has been to reach out to moderate Muslim groups. His speeches in Turkey and Egypt were meant to clarify differences between his administration and George Bush's and to aim for moral advantage.

Obama appointed General Stanley McChrystal, who led the Joint Special Operations Command, as the head of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF), which commands a North Atlantic Treaty Organization unit. He dispatched more U.S. troops. He has not wavered from the goal of defeating terrorism.

There will be many difficulties on the path to bringing stability to Afghanistan. The Taliban, which has vowed jihad against superpowers, is growing in strength. Battles in many Afghan regions have been intensifying. The toll of victims is rising. Early this month a NATO air strike killed many civilians in the province of Kundu.

In his speech to veterans last month Obama said the war in Afghanistan "is an indispensable war." It was an expression of alarm at the increasing power of the Taliban, which has strong influence in Pakistan, a country with a nuclear arsenal.

There are signs of change under the new Afghan government. The outcome of the presidential election - votes are still being tallied -- is the key to the future of Afghanistan. McChrystal visited Kundu immediately after the (collateral damage) incident and released a statement apologizing for the strike. Reportedly he achieved a degree of understanding from local people. Obama's policy of dialogue has received high marks from moderate Muslims.

The keys to Obama's exit strategy are to marginalize radical terrorist networks and to have Afghanistan engage in nation-building of its volition. The international community's cooperation is indispensable for preventing the Afghan war from becoming a quagmire like the Viet Nam.

(5) Editorial: Coalition agreement questionable for Japan-U.S. alliance

SANKEI (Page 2) (Abridged)
September 10, 2009

TOKYO 00002114 006 OF 010

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and its two allies, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the People's New Party (PNP), have now finally agreed to form a tripartite coalition government.

The three parties' agreement incorporated their common pledges they made public in the run-up to the recent general election for the House of Representatives. For example, one of their common public pledges is to leave the consumption tax rate unchanged at 5 PERCENT. Concerning Japan's foreign and security policies, their agreement incorporated the idea of building "a close, equal relationship between Japan and the United States" and the idea of reviewing the presence of U.S. military bases in Japan.

The coalition government must protect Japan's peace, security, and

prosperity. So Japan's alliance with the United States must not be undermined.

The agreement reached this time held down an anti-U.S. imprint as a result of giving first consideration to the establishment of a coalition government. Even so, we wonder if the new coalition government will be able to maintain the alliance in a facilitative way.

Meanwhile, their coalition agreement did not directly refer to the policy of ending the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. Instead, the three parties agreed to "remove a hotbed of terrorism" and "study measures to assist Afghanistan, based on its actual circumstances." Their agreement did not specify any alternative plans. However, this can be taken to imply that Japan will not break away from the war on terror at once.

DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama has indicated that he would examine the current government's antiterror policy when meeting with U.S. President Obama. However, he should present a specific plan that can build a relationship of mutual trust.

In the process of holding policy talks, the SDP proposed incorporating its stance of reviewing the planned relocation of the U.S. military's Futenma airfield, while the DPJ wanted to use abstract wording. In the end, their policy talks reached an agreement to "move in the direction of reviewing" the presence of U.S. military bases as well as the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. However, it would not be realistic to upset the results of negotiations held between Japan and the United States for years.

In addition, the three parties also agreed to propose revising the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement concerning the status of U.S. military personnel in Japan, including jurisdiction over them. However, we wanted the three parties to recognize the international situation, in which Japan and the United States should maintain and strengthen their bilateral alliance.

(6) Final coordination underway for Japan-China-ROK summit

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
September 11, 2009

Satoshi Saeki, Beijing

It has been learned that the Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean governments are in the final stage of coordinating a schedule for the planned summit meeting in China of their top leaders, with an

TOKYO 00002114 007 OF 010

eye toward holding it on Oct. 10. A foreign ministerial is expected to take place on Sept. 28 in Shanghai as a preparatory session, according to sources in Beijing on Sept. 10.

Reportedly there is a possibility that the venue for the summit will be changed from the planned location of Tianjin to Beijing. Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Yukio Hatoyama, who will be voted in as the new prime minister on Sept. 16, will visit China to hold talks with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and South Korean President Lee Myung Bak, in addition to Chinese President Hu Jintao. Hatoyama and the Chinese leaders will confirm that they plan to further develop the Japan-China relationship. DPJ Secretary General Katsuya Okada, who will be appointed as foreign minister, will attend the foreign ministerial meeting.

The Chinese government sent Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei, a Japan expert, to Tokyo on Sept. 7. Wu met with Hatoyama during his visit. According to sources familiar with Japan-China relations, Liu Hongcai, deputy chief of the Chinese Communist Party's International Department, an expert on Japan, will also visit Japan next week. The Chinese government is now demonstrating a policy of attaching importance to its relations with Japan.

(7) Okinawa calls on U.S. military, other organizations to reduce base noise

Kenji Chinen, director general of Okinawa Prefecture's cultural and environmental affairs department, and Munehide Taira, the prefecture's base disaster prevention coordinator, yesterday visited the U.S. Forces' Okinawa Area Coordinator Office, the U.S. Consulate General in Okinawa, the Defense Ministry's Okinawa Bureau, the Foreign Ministry's Okinawa office, and the Air Self-Defense Force's (ASDF) Naha base. The two Okinawa government officials asked them to reduce noise at U.S. Kadena Air Base, the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, and Naha Airport.

Citing the aircraft noise-restriction measures, which regulate flights from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., Okinawa's request letter for Kadena Air Base and the Futenma Air Station pointed out that no clear effects have been seen. The request also indicated exercises conducted by non-Okinawa base aircraft and noise in such densely populated areas as Naha City as problems. Okinawa prefecture called for 1) noise reduction, 2) strict implementation of the aircraft noise-restriction measures, 3) reporting on how the measures are being implemented to the prefecture and municipalities around the bases.

At the Foreign Ministry's Okinawa office, Kazuhiro Kuno, deputy head of the office, said: "We will continue to ask (the U.S. side) to avoid taking off in the early morning when aircraft that are provisionally deployed in Kadena Air Base return to the U.S."

According to Okinawa prefecture, U.S. Forces' Okinawa Area Coordinator Kevin Bishop (colonel), who responded (to Chinen and Taira), reportedly said: "We are aware that there is concern about noise (in local areas). So we will continue to make efforts to operate below the accepted noise level based on the (noise restriction measures)."

TOKYO 00002114 008 OF 010

(8) Nago mayor, citizens complain survey of noise levels near Futenma relocation site conducted through demo flights did not reflect reality

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 27) (Excerpts)
September 11, 2009

Northern Okinawa - Two U.S. military helicopters flew over the planned runways and helipads in waters off Henoko. The demo flights that took place in Nago City and Ginoza Village on September 10 were a survey that the local community had been demanding for a long time. However, the flight routes consisted mostly of air space over the site of Futenma's replacement facility off the coast selected by the national government. The aircraft did not fly over civilian areas or between military facilities, so the noise level was lower than what the residential areas experience on a daily basis during exercises. Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro noted that, "Noise was observed in the nearby areas," indicating that the government's plan will have a serious impact on the local community. Many citizens pointed out that the survey was insufficient and "did not reflect reality."

Shimabukuro and city officials observed the helicopters from the rooftop of a public apartment building in Henoko which overlooks the Henoko seashore. He gave the following comments to reporters after the survey ended: "Hovering produced noise exceeding 80 decibels in nearby residential areas. It was noisy. I felt that this will be a big problem for local residents."

More than 20 Nago City lawmakers and other officials gathered at the "Tower of Peace" around 1 kilometer from the planned runway site. After observing the helicopters hovering over the proposed helipad sites, Kenyu Shimabukuro, Nago City Assembly chairman who lives in Henoko, said that this is "absolutely unacceptable." He added that: "I was able to get an image of how close they are flying. Right now, helicopters fly over land on a daily basis. It will be difficult to assess noise with the demo flights alone."

Ginoza Village Mayor Hajime Azuma and about 20 local residents watched the demo flights from, the rooftop of the Second Server Farm in the Matsuda district. Azuma observed that, "The noise level is lower than that during normal exercises. This data will not be useful."

(9) Aircraft noise increased at 10 places around Kadena Air Base in Fiscal 2008

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 29) (Full)
September 8, 2009

The Okinawa prefectural government's culture and environment office revealed on Sept. 7 the results of an aircraft noise level measurement in fiscal 2008. According to the results, the WECPN (weighted equivalent continuous perceived level, an indicator of aircraft noise) exceeded environmental standards in nine (the same number as in fiscal 2007) of the 15 measurement stations around Kadena Air Base and three (the same number as in fiscal 2007) of the nine measurement stations around Futenma Air Station. Instances of noise generation at ten stations around Kadena Air Base exceeded the number in fiscal 2007. At Kadena instances of noise between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., when the number of flights is limited under the aircraft-noise-control-measures law, increased to 400.7 from 222.0

TOKYO 00002114 009 OF 010

(monthly averages) in fiscal 2007, a record number since 1996, when the Japanese and U.S. government agreed on the measurement law.

Okinawa government to ask U.S. military to reduce aircraft noise

The Okinawa prefectural government will ask five places, including the (Land, Infrastructure, and Transport Ministry's) Naha Airport office, on Sept. 8 and the U.S. bases in Okinawa on the 10th, to reduce noise levels, on the grounds the noise seriously affects the daily lives of residents of communities around the bases.

Instances of noise generation increased substantially at Yara A station, to 79.1 from 60.3 in fiscal 2007; at Yara B station, to 110.2 from 91.2 in 2007; and at Kamisei station, to 104.9 from 97.3 in 2007. The largest noise level was 118.7 decibels (dB) recorded at Sunabe station.

The WECPNL exceeded the environmental standard at nine stations, such as 89 in Sunabe (environmental standard of 75), and 82 in Yara B (70). At four stations the noise levels in 2008 topped those in 2007. Instances of predawn noise surpassed figures for fiscal 2007 at three of the four stations. For example, the figure at Yara A station was 101.4 times compared with 82.2 times in 2007.

Around Futenma Air Station aircraft noise increased at only one station. Even in eight stations where instances of noise decreased, the biggest decrease was at the Kamiojana station, to 56.4 instances in 2008 from 63.9 instances in 2007, a decrease of 7.5. There was no drastic decrease in noise levels. The highest intensity was 120.7 decibels at Kamiojana. The WECPNL was exceeded at three stations, including Kamiojana, where it was 83, compared with the environmental standard of 70. The WECPNL topped the environmental standard at one of the three stations around Naha Airport.

Kenji Chinen, chief of the Culture and Environment Office, said: "I don't think aircraft noise was reduced. Overall, such noise increased. It is difficult to identify reasons for the increase. We will tenaciously call for reduction (of noise)." Referring to the fact that predawn instances of noise doubled in stations around Kadena Air Base, he said, "I have heard from Kadena Town that engine tune-ups have increased. Since there is a road between the town office, where noise is measured, and the base, vehicle noise may contribute to the noise level, (but) we don't have any details."

(10) H2B rocket launch successful, Japanese space development enters new phase

ASAHI (Top play) (Excerpts)
Evening, September 11, 2009

The domestically produced rocket H2B No. 1, carrying Japan's first unmanned spaceship HTV transporting supplies for the International Space Station (ISS), was launched from the Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima Prefecture at 02:01:46 a.m. on September 11. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency confirmed after 15 minutes that the HTV had successfully entered the intended orbit.

While the ultimate success of this project can only be determined after the HTV docks at the ISS, the successful launch means that Japan has taken an important step toward a stronger international presence in space development.

TOKYO 00002114 010 OF 010

The rights to use the ISS for the participants of the project - the U.S., Europe, Russia, Canada, and Japan - are determined by the level of contribution. An agreement stipulating that Japan will provide the ISS with 6 tons of supplies was reached previously. Even though Japan's possession of its own transfer vehicle does not mean that its rights to use the ISS will be increased, there will be equipment that only the HTV can transport since the Space Shuttle will be retired next year. NASA operations chief Bill Gerstenmaier, who was present at the post-launch news conference, said that "the HTV will play a central role in the ISS's operations."

Japan also envisions developing the HTV into a manned spaceship in the future. Therefore, data collection is also a goal in this mission. Japan's space development has entered a new phase following Koichi Wakata's long-term stay at the ISS and the completion of the "Kibo" laboratory.

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